DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 202 810 SP 017 878

AUTHOR Craig, Sam B., Jr.
TITLE College and University Partnerships with School Districts.
PUB DATE [80]
NOTE 7p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Role; *Educational Cooperation; Educational Improvement; Faculty Development; Field Experience Programs; Government Role; Helping Relationship; Higher Education; Program Evaluation; *School Community Relationship; *School Districts; State Aid; *State School District Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

Basic principles for the establishment of successful higher education/school district partnerships are given based upon experiences in Pennsylvania. In examining the need for school districts to obtain technical assistance for development and improvement, two themes are isolated: improvement in learning, and improvement in professional preparation and certification. Successful partnerships are seen to have four principles as their basis: (1) institutional relationships of mutual benefit with specified roles and expectations; (2) individual "service coordinators" in the institutions of higher education to handle school district requests for assistance; (3) service evaluation by both partners; and (4) opportunities for college and university professors to gain current professional experiences in the basic schools. A brief description of state funding and services provided to date in Pennsylvania are given. (MJB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Sam B. Craig, Jr.
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED202810

College and University Partnerships with School Districts

Sam B. Craig, Jr.
Pennsylvania Department of Education

Introduction

A partnership is a pairing of a college/university with a nearby school district. This relationship must be described in a mutually developed letter of understanding which identifies the benefits to each partner as well as what each partner contributes. Although a one-to-one pairing is the most desirable relationship, small consortia are possible in this definition.

Problem. How can school districts obtain technical assistance for development and improvement at minimum cost or through reallocation of existing resources?

Solution. Build partnerships between colleges/universities and school districts. Be prepared to make the partnerships mutually beneficial. Anticipate less than perfect exchanges. Tolerate variations in expertise. Be committed to a systematic process.

Context. Pennsylvania's Department of Education, school districts (505) and colleges and universities (100) launched a coordinated approach to school improvement in November, 1979. This approach has two themes--improvement in learning in the basic schools (I) and improvement in professional preparation and certification (II). Theme II is a new state design for professional education (preservice, inservice and induction) and certification. Theme I--long range planning for school improvement--includes the partnership program.

Long range planning for school improvement has four steps: needs assessment, action planning, implementation and evaluation. These steps are conducted at the building level whenever possible, address curriculum, instruction and management, and take five years. Each school district prepares a plan within the first two years and implements it within the remaining three years.

Preparation and implementation of the plan, however, require a resource support network which is responsive, low cost and convenient to the schools. College and university partnerships are part of the Pennsylvania resource support network. Also included in the network are intermediate unit services, state agency field representatives and a computer file of information about instructional materials, promising practices and human resources in the state.

SP 017 878

Partnerships

The principal advice on building partnerships between school districts and colleges/universities came from the ad hoc Higher Education Advisory Committee on School Improvement. This committee included teacher and administrator organization representatives as well as representatives from four higher education sectors--13 state-owned colleges and one university, three state-related universities, 14 two-year community colleges and 69 private colleges and universities--and their respective special interest associations.

The advisory committee helped to produce the document which now guides school improvement partnerships in Pennsylvania--"College and University Roles." This brief document established four principles for a partnership.

1. Institutional Relationships. The relationships should benefit both partners and should have features such as:

a. a specific number of consultant days (e.g., 10 days) contributed by the college, university or consortium to the school district,

b. a rate of compensation for any consultant days beyond the number of contributed days,

c. school district requests for college, university or individual faculty member services through the college, university or consortium school improvement services coordinator,

d. opportunities for various short term professional experiences for education faculty members in the school district,

e. fiscal matters, and

f. ongoing evaluation of services.

Feature a was intensely debated by the advisory committee--higher education budget problems, special faculty compensation within collective bargaining agreements, expectations for a teaching load and rank promotion criteria. The debate produced agreement on two points: something--free services--has to be used by the colleges and universities to attract school districts to form partnerships; professors who already contribute services to districts may be willing to redirect their efforts to districts which are involved in a systematic improvement planning process.

Feature c is the key to successful partnerships by institutionalizing services and establishing accountability. Under non-partnership circumstances, districts contact professors directly and stimulate an individual entrepreneurial relationship. Such direct contacts are discouraged but not prohibited by the feature. At the very least, this feature provides the college/university with information about faculty activities. Under the best circumstances, use of the coordinator by the district will

permit the distribution of requests across many faculty members, increasing the possibility of contributed services.

Feature d benefits the college/university. Pennsylvania standards for approving certification programs require college/university "support for continuing professional development including experiences in situ designed to keep the faculty informed of the perspectives of basic education." In a partnership, the school district can provide opportunities for experiences such as short term team teaching with a 7th grade math teacher, board materials preparation with the superintendent and substitute teaching for the reading teacher, all coupled with formal and informal dialogue with school personnel.

2. Service Coordinator. The college or university president should designate a staff member to be the institution's coordinator for school improvement services. This appointment, frequently in addition to rather than a substitute for existing duties, provides official recognition for and institutionalization of the partnership. For smaller institutions, the coordinator's role has been combined with that of a department chairperson who has ongoing communication with local districts; for larger institutions, the role has become a special assignment in a field service unit. In almost all institutions, a senior professor or administrator has been designated to be the coordinator.

The coordinator's activities should include:

a. meeting with intermediate unit advisor and department field representative for information sharing,

b. receiving all school district requests for assistance and assembling available services,

c. providing the advisor and field representative with information about faculty assistance capability,

d. ascertaining a school district's satisfaction with the college's or university's assistance,

e. participating in six days of training and in two-day summer workshops for school districts with which partnerships might become established and

f. facilitating the college, university or consortium faculty's use of opportunities for professional experiences in the school district.

Activity a is the most time consuming and the one which, from the school district's perspective, permits the reallocation of existing resources in a systematic manner. The college/university coordinator is the third side of an external support triangle which includes an intermediate unit advisor and a state agency field representative. Among the three persons, the most appropriate assistance at the most reasonable cost can be located for the district. Any service contributor can be assured that his/her assistance is desired, needed and not duplicative.

Activity b is established and reinforced by the letter of understanding. The higher education representatives on the advisory committee favored this activity because it provided information about faculty activities in the community.

Activity c should assist the district to identify the best possible resources of the college--both human and material. It also provides data for the computer-based file of human, material and promising practices resources.

Activities d and f support the third and fourth principles of a partnership activity. Activity e provides the knowledge of the process and an opportunity to express partnership interest to district, intermediate unit and agency staffs.

3. Service Evaluation. The partnership should provide for an ongoing evaluation of services. Two issues were considered: (a) the college/university, because of the institutionalized partnerships, must be conscious of its reputation which is built upon the quality of technical assistance and (b) the school district, because of pressures to proceed with long range planning for school improvement, should have confidence that accountability for external services exists.

Committee debate on this service evaluation principle reflected the worst elements of mistrust between basic and higher education. At the first mention of evaluation, the basic education representatives interpreted it to mean that higher education was going to evaluate basic education. Evaluation was just as threatening to the higher education representatives for it questioned the institution's quality and could require new internal evaluation procedures.

Productive discussion finally centered on the importance of service evaluation for both partners and the fact that both partners would have to collaborate on any evaluation. Further, the principle emphasized the importance of the coordinator. Without the proper school district use of the coordinator, the college or university could not be held accountable for the quality of services.

4. College/University Faculty Development. The school district should provide opportunities for college and university professors to gain current professional experiences in the basic schools. The changing climate of the public schools requires changed procedures, content and expectations for educators and for those who prepare educators. Therefore, faculty development should not be limited to research or publication and should include professional experiences which can be an important check on the validity of preservice content.

The advisory committee discussed several perceptions: (1) student teacher supervisory faculty are already in the schools and are in constant conversation with basic school faculty, (2) the college/university might not want to send certain faculty members to gain experience in a district and the district might not want to receive certain faculty members and (3) experience opportunities would require significant administrative effort to create and would have collective bargaining implications for

both basic and higher education faculties. No one questioned the principle's value, but forced interaction of professionals, not all of whom are able practitioners, was a threatening prospect.

Funding

Eight weeks after the colleges and universities received the college and university role description, expressed their willingness to form partnerships and committed faculty members to six days of training in school improvement processes, the state agency announced a modest grant program with a total state budget of $60,000. School districts and intermediate units were extended small sums of money on a student per capita basis; colleges and universities could apply for partnership building grants ranging from $1,000 to $3,000. The applications were simple to write and hinged on whether or not a college or university had established a partnership with a school district.

Applications were made in three funding categories:

1. Consultation and/or Technical Assistance ($1,000)

2. Special Project on the State's 12 Goals of Quality Education ($2,000)

3. Exemplary Partnership ($3,000)

The first category was the most active and was designed to create conditions for the exchange of services between districts and colleges or universities. The second category was intended to support a partnership in which the district had identified its goal priorities for improvement and in which a highly specialized response by the college or university partner would be required. The third category was designed to promote partnership models which could be operated as low-budget teacher centers. The high funding level supported planning time for staffs in the college/university and the school district.

The grant funds could not be used for administrative or clerical staff service, coordinator service or in place of regular salaries. Funds could be used, however, for coordinator and consultant transportation and meal expenses, faculty--consultant honoraria at $100 per day, for college/university faculty training in school improvement and joint planning with district staff, and for transportation and meal expenses for faculty in a professional development program. In situations where the faculty member's consultant rate exceeds the $100 limit, the college or university must make up the difference and/or prevail on the faculty member to contribute his/her services.

Services

School district services to colleges/universities have included opportunities for professional development experiences, cooperation on research projects and field experience sites for students in certification programs. The college/university services to school districts have included:

--analysis and codification of district goals
--evaluation as a basis for staff development
--curriculum analysis to develop scope and sequence
--curriculum description documents
--facilities evaluation
--planning for comprehensive personnel development
--probe data analysis through computer services
--team building
--organizational development
--goal definition, clarification and analysis
--cooperation in gathering research data
--needs assessment instrument and data processing
--seminars on mainstreaming and facilitation of instruction
--one-credit course at no cost to the district
--reviews of literature and research
--test analysis and interpretation
--improvement of student self-esteem and effective communication
--technical assistance in public relations aspects of new building construction
--improvement in intra-district communication
--a booklet on successful change procedures
--study sessions on enhancement of the teaching process
--regional newsletter on school improvement services/achievements
--pilot-testing of a university center for effective education
--needs assessment for low priority goals
--identification and demonstration of teaching strategies
--improvement of writing instruction and administrator support training
--action plan development
--kindergarten planned course for state Goals of Quality Education

Conclusions

Pennsylvania's colleges and universities have formed partnerships with school districts (29 colleges/universities with 56 school districts), have committed $98,340 from their own resources to match $60,000 in state grants and have become a viable source of technical assistance. Viable, because the cost is low, because the services are coordinated, desired and needed, and because the colleges and universities accrue benefits in increased faculty awareness and public image. Four conditions were instrumental in producing these partnerships:

--a state agency commitment to reconciling basic and higher education
--a systematic planning process in the school districts
--an information exchange network
--coordinated leadership involving the state agency, colleges, universities, intermediate units and school districts

SC/lem/5-7